

THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER AMERICA

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OPERA AMERICA ANNOUNCES RECIPIENTS OF OPERA GRANTS FOR FEMALE COMPOSERS: COMMISSIONING GRANTS

Supported by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation

A TOTAL OF \$98,000 AWARDED FOR FIVE OPERAS

July 10, 2018 (New York) — **OPERA America**, the national service organization for opera and the nation's leading champion for American opera, is pleased to announce the latest recipients of **Commissioning Grants** from the **Opera Grants for Female Composers** program, made possible through the generosity of the **Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation**.

Opera Grants for Female Composers promote the development of works by women, and raise the visibility of women writing for the operatic medium. The program consists of two granting components: Discovery Grants of up to \$15,000 that are awarded directly to female composers to advance new works; and Commissioning Grants of up to \$50,000 that are awarded to opera companies for commissions by female composers. Since its inception, the program has awarded a total of \$898,000 to opera companies and composers.

A total of \$98,000 was awarded to the following companies to support the commissioning of five projects:

- **Beth Morrison Projects** (New York, NY) for *Adoration* by **Mary Kouyoumdjian**
- **On Site Opera** (New York, NY) for *Lady Murasaki and the Tale of Genji* (working title) by **Michi Wiancko**
- **Opera on Tap** (New York, NY) for *Looking at You* by **Kamala Sankaram**
- **Opera Philadelphia** for *Ashes* (working title) by **Jennifer Higdon**
- **Washington National Opera** for *Taking Up Serpents* by **Kamala Sankaram**

These grants, which were awarded by an independent adjudication panel, provide funds that cover up to 50 percent of each composer's commissioning fee. (See below for descriptions of the funded works.)

Over the past 30 years, OPERA America has awarded nearly \$18 million to its Professional Company Members to support the work of opera creators, companies and administrators. However, until the launch of Opera Grants for Female Composers in 2013, fewer than five percent of the organization's grants for repertoire development had been awarded to works by female composers.

"Works by female composers are gaining traction on stages across North America, as our member companies commission an unprecedented number of operas by women," stated Marc A. Scorca, president/CEO of OPERA America. "We are grateful to the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation for enabling us to

continue this important work, which has brought noteworthy composers to the forefront and enlivened our operatic repertoire with new works.”

An independent panel of experts reviewed a total of 13 applications. This cycle’s panelists were **Jeremy Geffen**, senior director and artistic adviser, Carnegie Hall; **Heather Johnson**, mezzo-soprano; **Kristin Kuster**, composer; **John de los Santos**, director, choreographer and librettist; and **Viswa Subbaraman**, conductor.

Information about the next round of Commissioning Grants will be available in fall 2018/2019.

ABOUT THE 2018 COMMISSIONING GRANT RECIPIENTS

BETH MORRISON PROJECTS | bethmorrisonprojects.org
Adoration | Mary Kouyoumdjian, composer; Royce Vavrek, librettist



Based on the Atom Egoyan film of the same name, *Adoration* follows the fictitious and actual circumstances of how a child became an orphan, and how religious intolerance and hatred can lead to viral hysteria and justification for death. This gripping drama fosters a challenging discussion about the root causes of hate and how we can strive for a more just society.

ON SITE OPERA | osopera.org
Lady Murasaki and the Tale of Genji (working title)
Michi Wiancko, composer; Deborah Brevoort, librettist



On Site Opera will present the world premiere of *Lady Murasaki and the Tale of Genji*, composed by Michi Wiancko with libretto by Deborah Brevoort. The site-specific opera will be staged in the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Astor Court. The opera is inspired by *The Tale of Genji*, an 11th-century novel written by a lady-in-waiting in Japan’s imperial court. This one-act, family-friendly opera will be co-commissioned and developed by On Site Opera, MetLiveArts and American Lyric Theater.


OPERA ON TAP | operaontap.org
Looking at You | Kamala Sankaram, composer; Rob Handel, librettist



Looking at You is an immersive techno-noir music-theater piece confronting the issue of privacy in our digitized society. Directed by Kristin Marting, it is a story of love and espionage fusing Edward Snowden with *Casablanca*, driven by a dynamic score for three saxophones, piano and electronics. Set inside a corporate headquarters — and integrating data mined from the audience in real time — it lays bare urgent questions of our time.


Kamala Sankaram previously received a Discovery Grant in 2015 for *Looking at You*.

OPERA PHILADELPHIA | operaphila.org
Ashes (working title) | Jennifer Higdon, composer; Jerre Dye, librettist



Opera Philadelphia will produce the world premiere of *Ashes* (working title), the first chamber opera from Jennifer Higdon. The opera will draw from the true story of an art heist to describe a woman who claims to have destroyed priceless masterpieces to save her son, who is accused of the crime. Directed by Christian R  th, *Ashes* will be part of Opera Philadelphia's Festival O20, its annual multi-venue urban opera festival.

WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA | kennedy-center.org/WNO
Taking Up Serpents | Kamala Sankaram, composer; Jerre Dye, librettist



WNO will present the world premiere of *Taking Up Serpents*, an hourlong work exploring the controversial world of religious snake-handling. Members of the WNO Orchestra will be conducted by Lidiya Yankovskaya, music director of Chicago Opera Theater. *Taking Up Serpents*, directed by Alison Moritz, will be presented January 11 and 13, 2019 at the Kennedy Center.

Commissioning Grants: Recipients to Date (24)

Opera Company	Composer	Work	Award Year
American Opera Projects	Victoria Bond	<i>Gulliver's Travels</i>	2016
American Opera Projects	Wang Jie	<i>Rated R for Rat</i>	2015
Ardea Arts/ Family Opera Initiative	Kitty Brazelton	<i>Animal Tales</i>	2016
Beth Morrison Projects	Sarah Kirkland Snider	<i>The Living Light</i>	2016
Beth Morrison Projects	Ellen Reid	<i>Prism</i>	2015
Beth Morrison Projects	Mary Kouyoumdjian	<i>Adoration</i>	2018
Fort Worth Opera and San Diego Opera	Gabriela Lena Frank	<i>The Last Dream of Frida and Diego</i>	2015
The Glimmerglass Festival	Jeanine Tesori	<i>Blue</i>	2016
The Glimmerglass Festival	Laura Karpman	<i>Wilde Tales</i>	2015
Houston Grand Opera	Laura Kaminsky	<i>Some Light Emerges</i>	2016
Houston Grand Opera	Nkeiru Okoye	<i>Home of My Ancestors</i>	2017
The Industry	Ellen Reid	<i>HOPSCOTCH</i> (selection)	2015
Minnesota Opera	Paola Prestini	<i>The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane</i>	2017
On Site Opera	Michi Wiancko	<i>Lady Murasaki and the Tale of Genji</i> (working title)	2018
Opera Colorado	Lori Laitman	<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>	2016
Opera Columbus	Korine Fujiwara	<i>The Flood of 1913</i>	2016
Opera on Tap	Kamala Sankaram	<i>Looking at You</i>	2018
Opera Parall��le	Laura Kaminsky	<i>Today It Rains</i>	2017

Opera Philadelphia	Missy Mazzoli	<i>Breaking the Waves</i>	2015
Opera Philadelphia	Jennifer Higdon	<i>Ashes</i> (working title)	2018
Sarasota Opera	Rachel J. Peters	<i>Rootabaga Country</i>	2017
Seattle Opera	Sheila Silver	<i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i>	2017
Washington National Opera	Kamala Sankaram	<i>Taking Up Serpents</i>	2018
Washington National Opera, Opera Omaha and Miller Theatre at Columbia University	Missy Mazzoli	<i>Proving Up</i>	2017

Discovery Grants: Recipients to Date (38)

Composer	Work	Award Year
Julia Adolphe	<i>A Barrel of Laughs, A Vale of Tears</i>	2016
Kitty Brazelton	<i>The Art of Memory</i>	2015
Faye Chiao	<i>Island of the Moon</i>	2017
Mary Ellen Childs	<i>On Beyond</i>	2016
Anna Clyne	<i>Eva</i>	2014
Lisa DeSpain	<i>That Hell-Bound Train</i>	2018
Alexa Dexa	<i>Be a Doll</i>	2018
Michelle DiBucci	<i>Charlotte Salomon: Der Tod und die Malerin (Death and the Painter)</i>	2014
Emily Doolittle	<i>Jan Tait and the Bear</i>	2016
Ellen Fishman	<i>Marie Begins</i>	2017
Germaine Franco	<i>¡La Capitana!</i>	2018
Laura Kaminsky	<i>As One</i>	2014
Laura Karpman	<i>Balls</i>	2015
Elizabeth Kelly	<i>Losing Her Voice</i>	2018
Leanna Kirchoff	<i>Friday After Friday</i>	2018
Veronika Krausas	<i>Ghost Opera</i>	2018
Kristin Kuster	<i>Kept</i>	2014
Anne LeBaron	<i>Psyche & Delia</i>	2017
Patricia Leonard	<i>My Dearest Friend</i>	2015
Jing Jing Luo	<i>Ashima</i>	2015
Fang Man	<i>Golden Lily</i>	2014
Odaline de la Martinez	<i>Imoinda</i>	2015
Julia Meinwald	<i>REB+VoDKa+ME</i>	2018
Grace Oberhofer	<i>ICONS/IDOLS</i>	2017
Nkeiru Okoye	<i>We've Got Our Eye on You</i>	2016
Tawnie Olson	<i>Sanctuary and Storm</i>	2017
Rene Orth	<i>Machine</i>	2016
Frances Pollock	<i>Stinney: An American Execution</i>	2017

Elena Ruehr	<i>Crafting the Bonds</i>	2016
Kamala Sankaram	<i>The Privacy Show</i>	2015
Laura Elise Schwendinger	<i>Artemisia</i>	2016
Liza Seigido	<i>Cyborgs Are Dancing</i>	2018
Sheila Silver	<i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i>	2014
Kate Soper	<i>The Romance of the Rose</i>	2017
Su Lian Tan	<i>Lotus Lives</i>	2015
Dalit Warshaw	<i>CAMILLE CLAUDEL</i>	2017
Cynthia Lee Wong	<i>No Guarantees</i>	2017
Luna Pearl Woolf	<i>THE PILLAR</i>	2014

For more information about OPERA America, its many programs and the National Opera Center, visit operaamerica.org.



About OPERA America

OPERA America (operaamerica.org) leads and serves the entire opera community, supporting the creation, presentation and enjoyment of opera.

- Artistic services help opera companies and creative and performing artists to improve the quality of productions and increase the creation and presentation of North American works.
- Information, technical and administrative services to opera companies reflect the need for strengthened leadership among staff, trustees and volunteers.
- Education, audience development and community services are designed to enhance all forms of opera appreciation.

Founded in 1970, OPERA America's worldwide membership network includes 150 Professional Company Members, 250 Associate, Business and Educational Members, 1,200 Individual Members, and 18,000 subscribers to the association's electronic news service. In response to the critical need for suitable audition, rehearsal and recording facilities, OPERA America opened the first-ever **NATIONAL OPERA CENTER** (operaamerica.org/OperaCenter) in September 2012 in New York City. With a wide range of artistic and administrative services in a purpose-built facility, OPERA America is dedicated to increasing the level of excellence, creativity and effectiveness across the field.

OPERA America's long tradition of supporting and nurturing the creation and development of new works led to the formation of the Opera Fund, a growing endowment that allows OPERA America to make a direct impact on the ongoing creation and presentation of new opera and music-theater works. Since its inception of its granting programs, OPERA America has awarded a total of nearly \$18 million to the opera field to support the work of opera creators, companies and administrators. Currently, OPERA America awards more than \$2 million each year through its range of grant initiatives.